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HUMAN SERVICES FOR MONTANA'S FUTURE

GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUBMITTED BY

THE GOVERNOR'S HUMAN SERVICES DELIVERY TASK FORCE

SEPTEMBER 15, 1988

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Prepared by:

John M. Shearer, Coordinator
Diana Spas, Technical Writer
Helena, Montana

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PREFACE

This report is divided into two parts. Part I is an Executive Summary that briefly describes the Human Services Delivery Task Force, its mission and activities (Chapter I), and Task Force recommendations (Chapter II).

Part II¹ is the main body of the final report. It contains a review of human service history, policies, funding, administration, task force recommendations and supporting documentation (Chapters III - VI and Appendices I - II).

Task Force staff and presenters developed numerous documents for meetings and Task Force decision-making. Often these materials provided new ways of looking at and understanding Montana's human services. They are located in Appendix I. Appendix II is a separately-bound resource directory of human services.

Task Force recommendations and conclusions have been boxed for emphasis. Primary recommendations are double-boxed. The recommendations involving human services mission, the fundamental purpose of assistance and child support require reading the related references and materials in Appendix I.

For an overview of human services issues in Montana, read "A Brief History of Relief" found in Chapter III and Chapter II "Executive Summary of Recommendations."

The authors wish to thank those who prepared reports, made presentations to the Task Force and those who have taken time to review and correct the various drafts of this document. Persons providing editorial assistance include Bill Yaeger, Richard Roeder, Teresa Olcott Cohea, Lois Steinbeck, Jim Smith and Linda W. Shearer.

¹The Final Report includes both Parts I and II, supporting documentation, appendices and bibliography. Copies are available from the Citizen's Advocate Office, 1-800-332-2272 or 444-3468 in Helena.

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APPENDIX II A DIRECTORY OF MONTANA HUMAN SERVICES²

²Appendix II is bound under separate cover.

PART I
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Governor Ted Schwinden created the Human Services Delivery Task Force July 1, 1987, to undertake a study of the human service delivery system and all human service programs. The study was to accomplish the following objectives:

1. provide general recommendations on the division of state and local government responsibilities for the administration of human services.
2. provide a structure for multi-county administration or coordination of human service programs.
3. simplify the multiple funding arrangements that exist between the state and local governments for human services.
4. provide equitable funding among counties, as well as between local governments and the state.
5. ensure representation for local governments on boards for human service programs.

The executive order creating the Task Force³ implied the need for improved policy, system design and accountability. It pointed to the value of community-based services and noted that, while the constitutional responsibility for certain welfare services rests with the state, resources and legal authority are generally controlled by local officials or boards.

The nineteen-member Task Force is made up of private citizens representing various constituencies, county commissioners, legislators and the directors of the five human service departments - Social and Rehabilitation Services, Institutions, Family Services, Health and Environmental Sciences and Labor and Industry.

³Appendix I, Final Report, Part II.

Stephen L. Fenter
 (Task Force Chairperson)
 Manager, Private Ledger
 Billings, Mt.

Tom Crosser
 Clancy, Mt.

Dr. John Drynan, Dir.,
 Dept. of Health & Env. Sci.

Gail Gray, Dir.,
 Dept. of Social &
 Rehabilitation Services

Richard "Dick" Gasvoda,
 Commissioner
 Cascade County

A.R. "Toni" Hagener,
 Commissioner
 Hill County

Sen. Mathias A. (Matt) Himsl
 Kalispell, Mt.
 Cascade County

Katherin A. Kelker,
 Chairperson
 Billings School Board

LaNelle E. Peterson,
 Commissioner
 Pondera County

Alfred Kaschube,
 Commissioner
 Roosevelt County

Peg Hartman,
 Commissioner
 Department of Labor & Industry

Janet Stevens,
 Commissioner
 Missoula County

Jim Smith, Exec. Dir.,
 Region VIII Community
 Action Agency Association

Carroll South, Dir.,
 Dept. of Institutions

Eugene F. Huntington, Dir.,
 Dept. of Family Services

Rep. Ron Miller
 Great Falls, Mt.

Rep. Gary Spaeth
 Joliet, Mt.

Sen. Eleanor Vaughn
 Libby, Mt.

Charles Butler, Jr.,
 Vice President
 Blue Shield/Cross of Mt.

The Task Force met nine times during the past year. They began with an overview of each human service agency and most programs now operating in Montana. They reviewed welfare-related work programs and the proposed Constitutional Amendment relating to the legislature's authority to provide economic, social and rehabilitative services; set eligibility criteria, duration and levels of benefits. The Task Force solicited system and program reforms from its own members, the public, special interest groups, recipients, provider and agency staff. The Task Force then narrowed its focus and directed staff to prepare an in-depth study of selected areas and to develop options. This study makes up the bulk of this report. From this the Task Force drew conclusions and chose the following recommendations.

Except at work sessions, audience input was accepted or solicited during Task Force meetings. A discussion draft of the final report was circulated to counties, interested members of the public, advocate groups, interested recipients, providers, staff and others. Public input meetings were held in six Montana communities. The Task Force considered this input before making its final recommendations to the Governor.⁴

⁴A summary of input is in Appendix I, Final Report, Part II.

CHAPTER II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Human Services Delivery Task Force recommends that the State of Montana adopt the following policies, program reforms, administrative and funding arrangements:

HUMAN SERVICES MISSION

It should be the policy of the State of Montana that the purpose of human services is to maintain or enhance the quality of life of Montana's citizens by accomplishing three primary goals:⁵

1. Provide assistance with food, clothing, shelter and medical needs as necessary to ensure the basic survival of those who cannot provide for themselves and to temporarily assist those capable of achieving self-sufficiency;

2. Provide assistance with protection of persons who by reason of age, infirmity or disability are unable to protect themselves from exploitation, abuse, neglect or endangerment and by protecting the health and safety of the public at large, its persons, property and environment;

3. Provide assistance to persons in achieving and maintaining a degree of independence and self-sufficiency compatible with individual ability.

WELFARE AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE POLICY

It should be the policy of the State of Montana that the first and fundamental purpose of public assistance and related programs of relief is to assist those who cannot provide for themselves to survive by providing short-term assistance with food, clothing, shelter and emergent medical relief. The second purpose of assistance and related programs is to foster independence and self-sufficiency.

⁵Refer to Human Service and General Assistance Policy Definitions in Appendix I, Final Report, Part II.

It should be the policy of the State of Montana to: (1) provide varying levels of general assistance (GA) based upon local area costs; (2) require applicants for general assistance to take part in services aimed at achieving self-sufficiency; (3) revise its regulations to allow general assistance recipients to accept short-term work without losing assistance.

It should be the policy of the State of Montana to: (1) continue the Aid to Families with Dependent Children - Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP) program; (2) ensure that non-custodial parents, not taxpayers, be held responsible for fair and adequate support of their minor children, by establishing the following in statute:

- a. a "percentage of gross income and assets standard" for calculating child support;
- b. mandatory wage-withholding of child support;
- c. assignment of paternity procedures.

SERVICES

Transition services to AFDC families should include: (1) continuation of financial assistance based on performance for those persons involved in ongoing education and training; (2) extended daycare and medical aid for those persons leaving assistance to work.

Services designed to prevent AFDC dependency should be initiated which include: (1) a pilot program giving priority for services aimed at self-sufficiency to young, first-time AFDC recipients with children less than 6 years old; (2) a pilot program assisting the working poor with one-time, short-term daycare, medical coverage and financial assistance, so they may attend training programs leading to higher-paying employment; (3) changing current practice to:

- a. encourage those participating in preparation for work services to complete training rather than to take immediate entry level employment and,

b. to encourage recipients to choose training that leads to full-time employment with opportunities for advancement.

Services aimed at achieving self-sufficiency should be offered to unemployed non-custodial parents who cannot contribute to the support of their child(ren).

Services to GA recipients with serious barriers to employment should include: (1) procedures to ensure increased use of existing mental health, alcohol counseling, employment training and other existing community services and (2) incentive-based assistance in which recipients might secure serial part-time jobs without losing all financial aid.

UNIFORM FUNDING OF GENERAL ASSISTANCE

Because general assistance is a state responsibility, the Task Force believes that the state should also be responsible for funding it. Ideally, assignment of costs should be based upon a limited contribution by the state general fund plus contributions by each county. County contributions should be based upon taxable valuation of land, such as now occurs with the university mill levy or some other formula for funding assistance that results in equalization. In the present funding arrangement for state-administered county assistance programs, part of the funding comes from the general fund and is combined with 12-mill county levies. The Task Force recommends that the general fund contribution be continued as a way to reduce the impact upon rural areas, some of which would see a tax increase with equalization.

ADMINISTRATION OF CERTAIN PROGRAMS

The State of Montana should implement the following policies, organizational structures and practices for the administration of selected human services programs:

1. Provide for Regional Coordinating Councils for multi-county coordination of services. Councils should coordinate human services in their areas by:

- a. reviewing area plans submitted to state and federal government;

- b. preparing annual plans and recommendations for increased coordination of local services;
- c. preparing a plan for long-range consolidation of support services (e.g., office space, clerical, equipment, transportation, etc.) for local programs;
- d. contracting with state agencies for the administration of interagency projects, staff and facilities;
- e. directly administering small programs that cannot be efficiently administered by a separate organization.

2. The Human Services Delivery Task Force has determined that caring for the poor is a moral and social obligation of all citizens and, consequently, of the State of Montana. To ensure just and uniform administration and to withstand court tests, determination of what needs shall be met and eligibility standards should be established by the state. Further, administrative authority should not be separated from constitutional, program or fiscal responsibilities. In order to foster local government involvement while unifying administrative, program and fiscal accountability, the Task Force recommends that:

- a. all county welfare boards or regional coordinating councils (pps.46-49) select county welfare directors from a list, provided by SRS, of qualifying applicants;
- b. local directors work with county welfare boards or regional coordinating councils to prepare and submit annual plans for local human service office administration, office policy and practice;
- c. localities should periodically set levels of general assistance according to prevailing local costs. The State of Montana should provide justification for amendments to local benefit-level recommendations.

The state should be obligated to honor local plans except where contrary to policy, or another cause is identified;

4. During the first month of general assistance, or as necessary, benefits should be paid based on documentation of existing or anticipated expenses;

5. State-level administrative functions for institutions and community-based services serving individuals with developmental disabilities should be consolidated in the Department of Family Services by July 1, 1990, as part of a larger community-based services consolidation. Administrative structure, funding and other existing features of the Developmental Disabilities Division should be maintained.



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